

Asbestos awareness on Transpower sites

TRANSPOWER



What is asbestos?

- Asbestos is a naturally occurring silicate mineral found in certain types of rock
- It is a hazardous substance and a contaminant – but in good condition and undisturbed is not dangerous



Where is it found?

In thousands of types of building products:

- Roofing
- Cladding
- Decking
- Insulation
- Textured ceilings
- Walls and boards
- Cement
- Drainage and water pipes
- Vinyl and carpet tiles
- And so on ...



Where is it found?

- Asbestos containing materials can be anywhere and everywhere in the built environment
- Asbestos was used to make many, many products used in buildings because of its useful qualities
- Many New Zealanders have been unknowingly exposed to asbestos over the years at home, school, and work



Examples found on Transpower sites



Asbestos baseboards, soffits, cladding etc



Asbestos corrugated roofing (general)



Asbestos vinyl (general)



Circuit boards, OJJB panels



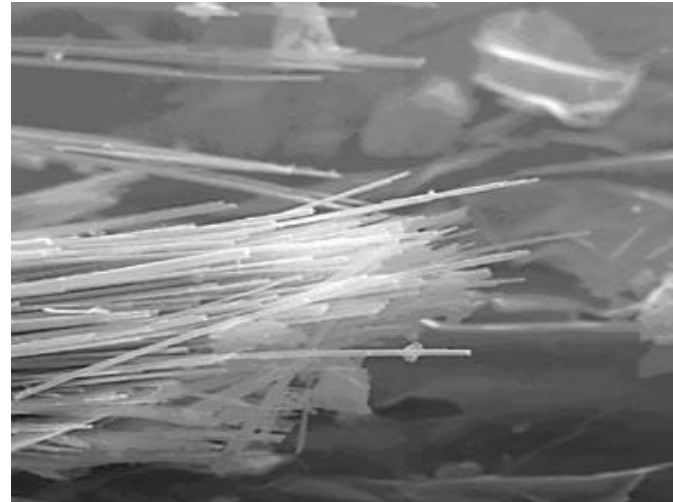
Water pipes, storm water, gutters, down pipes



Why is it dangerous?

Asbestos, when disturbed, forms short sharp insoluble fibres.

When breathed in, the fibres can penetrate deep into the lungs.



Why is it dangerous? (cont.)

Asbestos in the lungs can cause:

- Pleural plaques
 - These take around 10 years to develop and indicate asbestos exposure. They do not increase the chance of more serious problems, and most people with them are problem-free.
- Asbestos-related lung cancers
 - These take about 20 years to develop, and the risk is greatly increased by smoking. (Smoking is by far the biggest cause of lung cancer in New Zealand.)



Why is it dangerous? (cont.)

- Asbestosis
 - The scarring of the lungs, after about 20 years. Sometimes this is visible on an x-ray. Some patients remain well, others get short of breath and cough. Sometimes activities become restricted.
- Mesothelioma
 - Usually after 40-60 years. This is cancer of the lung lining; it is extremely rare. In NZ, mesotheliomas have generally been connected with large exposure or long-term exposure to asbestos (or both).



Understanding asbestos exposure risk

- People who work in an environment where asbestos is present can be exposed to it when the material is disturbed
- Asbestos is only dangerous when disturbed (e.g., deteriorated, loose and friable, or when worked by cutting, drilling or removal)
- There is a risk to the environment from asbestos contamination



Understanding asbestos exposure risk

- Risk of harm is related to:
 - the period of time a person has been exposed
 - how often exposure occurred
 - what the concentration of asbestos fibres in the air was at the time of exposure (e.g. clouds of dust)
- Without a high level of exposure, these conditions are unlikely.
- Risk of harm increases with smoking.



What should I do if I find suspected asbestos?

- Stop work and report it to your supervisor/manager and Transpower manager
- Follow WorkSafe and Transpower guidelines (including for environmental management), including:
 - Treat it as asbestos and a hazard until testing confirms otherwise
 - Identify correct procedures and follow them
 - Sign and demarcate the area
 - Engage authorised providers to test and remove or manage in accordance with legislative requirements (available on the WorkSafe website)



What can I do to protect myself?

- Limit inadvertent exposure: Check the hazard register where you are working, or asbestos register (where available). These show where asbestos containing materials have been identified
- Check the work area for signs of potential asbestos containing materials, and be aware that these may be uncovered during work



What can I do to protect myself?

- Follow appropriate work procedures when working near identified asbestos, ensuring you wear asbestos compliant PPE
- Ensure correct PPE is worn for all potentially dusty environments, including roof spaces (dust from other products is also not good for us, e.g. dust from silica and fibreglass)
- Be aware of potential buried material when excavating (e.g. old dump sites)



What should I do if I have been exposed?

- Advise your employer of the exposure
- Depending on the level of exposure, seek advice on joining the Worksafe asbestos register and/or a screening program
- Email People Direct, and People Direct will get in touch regarding asbestos screening and testing (peopledirect@transpower.co.nz)



Summary

- Asbestos is found in many places at work and at home
- Ensure you protect yourself and others from breathing dust from asbestos containing products (and other products that could be harmful)
- People who develop asbestos-related health problems have usually been exposed either to a large dose (e.g. clouds of dust) or low dose over a long time



Questions?

- Talk to your Health & Safety people
- Talk to your supervisor or manager
- Email peopledirect@transpower.co.nz
- Contact Transpower's Environmental Team

